

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

a hostile face to France. * * * It has in my opinion completely demolished the monarchical party here. (To James Monroe, 1795. F. VII., 27.)

JESUS.—In this state of things among Jews, Jesus appeared. His parentage was obscure; his condition poor; his education null; his natural endowments great; his life correct and innocent; he was meek, benevolent, patient, firm, disinterested and of the sublimest eloquence.

The disadvantages under which his doctrine appeared are remarkable.

1. Like Socrates and Epictetus, he wrote nothing himself.

2. But he had not, like them, a Xenophon or an Arrian to

write for him. On the contrary, all the learned of his country,

entrenched in its power and riches, were opposed to him, lest

his labors should undermine their advantages; and the com

mitting to writing his life and doctrines fell on the most unlet

tered and ignorant men, who wrote, too, from memory, and not

till long after the transaction had passed.

3. According to the ordinary fate of those who attempt to

enlighten and reform mankind, he fell an early victim to the

jealousy and combination of the altar and the throne, at

about 33 years of age, his reason having not yet attained the

maximum of its energy, nor the course of his preaching, which

was but of three years at most, presented occasions for develop

ing a complete set of morals.

4. Hence the doctrines which he really delivered were de

fective as a whole, and fragments only of what he did deliver

have come to us mutilated, misstated and often unintelligible.

5. They have been still more disfigured by the corruptions of

schismatising followers, who have found an interest in sophisti

cating- and perverting the simple doctrines he taught by en

grafting on them the mysticisms of a Grecian
sophist, frittering
them into subtilities and obscuring them with
jargon, until
they have caused good men to reject the whole in
disgust and
to view Jesus himself as an impostor.

Notwithstanding these disadvantages, a system
of morals is presented to us, which, if filled up in
the true style and spirit